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Conservation Land Grows by Three

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

Selectmen supported three different conservation land acquisitions Monday night: a purchase, a gift and an easement.

The town will buy 14.01 acres off Lincoln St. from Alvin Crowell for \$45,000. This money will come from the Conservation Fund. This fund is used to pay for small land purchases and costs associated with buying land — appraisals, surveys, and legal fees. It also funds conservation land management.

The landlocked parcel is located behind the cranberry bog on Rte 14 near exit 11 and be-

hind the town's only cellular tower. It is also behind the Waiting Hill conservation property.

Conservation Commission members are excited about this property because it meets many of the criteria for conservation land listed in the 1997 Open Space Plan. It is located in the Eastern Greenbelt, contains freshwater wetlands, abuts existing conservation land and is located in an area that contributes to the town's drinking water supply. The owner has agreed to include access to Lincoln St. Selectmen voted unani-

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mously to support the purchase.

The board also supported a gift of 2.916 acres off Autumn Avenue with an easement over another parcel for access. This land, owned by James West of Pine St., consists of wetlands with an upland buffer. It was previously offered to the town for purchase under the right of first refusal with Chapter 61A, a law that allows preferential tax treatment for forestry land owners. This lot gives the town access to 65 acres of Chapter 61A land owned by West that the town would like to buy someday when its right of first refusal comes up on this piece.

Selectmen unanimously voted to approve spending \$5,800 from the Conservation Fund to buy a conservation restriction on 9.9 acres of upland and wetlands with fresh water streams and 600 feet of frontage on Pine Brook. Buying a conservation restriction means buying the development rights to the parcel. It is not open to the public because it is still privately owned.

Commissioners felt the land should be protected because it contains a high quality fresh water stream with rich vegetation. It also has a red maple

swamp, streamside swamps and a potential vernal pool. An old stone wall shows past evidence of grazing/pasturing there.

The total acreage of this land is 11.2 acres with 1.3 acres in Kingston. The conservation restriction is between the town and the Jones River Watershed Association, which bought the land for \$30,000.

This year town meeting supported \$75,000 for the Conservation Fund. In the past up to \$100,000 has been placed in this fund. With the passage of the Community Preservation Act and its subsequent money for open space, including conservation land, Conservation Commissioners worried that the town would not continue to add to the Conservation Fund. However, this money allows the commission to act quickly to buy less expensive parcels and to manage the land it already has acquired, said Commissioner Arthur Vautrain. Money from the Community Preservation Act cannot be used for the Conservation Fund, because it is for specific purchases that must be both approved by the Community Preservation Committee and supported by town meeting.